

Message Text

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ACTION OPR-02

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASCH, JO
SUBJECT: AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

1. AS PART OF OUR CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF JORDAN CONCERNING THE PROBLEM OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL, THE AMBASSADOR DISCUSSED THE ISSUE WITH THE NEW MINISTER OF EDUCATION, 'ABD AS-SALAM AL-MAJALI, WHO IS ALSO CONCURRENTLY MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. DISCUSSIONS TOOK PLACE AT THE END OF NOVEMBER AND ON DECEMBER 21 FOLLOWING AMBASSADOR'S RETURN FROM TRIP OUTSIDE OF JORDAN.

2. INITIAL DISCUSSION CENTERED ON TWO QUESTIONS: (A) THE PROBLEM OF ACQUIRING PRESENT LAND AND BUILDINGS, AND (B) THE NEED TO PROVIDE THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL WITH SOME LEGAL STATUS WHICH WOULD PERMIT IT IN FUTURE GO BORROW FUNDS AND SO FORTH.

3. MAJALI, WHO IS FRIENDLY, CREATIVE AND SYMPATHETIC, AND WHO IS ALSO A FORMER PRESIDENT OF JORDAN UNIVERSITY, SAW IMMEDIATELY THE ISSUES. AT THE FIRST MEETING HE SUGGESTED THAT THE LOGICAL MEANS OF LIQUIDATING THE PRESENT DISPUTE WITH PROPERTY OWNERS WOULD BE FOR GOJ TO PROVIDE SIMILAR AMOUNT OF PROPERTY IN SAME AREA TO BE TRADED TO THE LANDLORDS FOR CURRENT SCHOOL PLOT. HE UNDER-

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TOOK TO INVESTIGATE FEASIBILITY THIS ALTERNATIVE WITH PRIME MINISTER. WE AGREED TO LOOK INTO LOCAL LAND OWNERSHIP TO FIND SUITABLE PLOT. WITH REGARD TO SECOND QUESTION, WE PROVIDED MAJALI WITH PROPOSED SCHOOL CHARTER UNDER LOCAL EDUCATION LAW.

4. AT SECOND MEETING DECEMBER 21 JAJALI TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT PRIME MINISTER HAD AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO LAND EXCHANGE, TAKING LAND FROM ADJACENT ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB PLOT WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN ORIGINALLY TO THAT BODY BY GOJ. LAND THUS TAKEN WOULD BE EXCHANGED WITH PRESENT OWNERS. GOVERNMENT THEN CONTEMPLATES BECOMING LANDLORD FOR SCHOOL AND AGREEING ON LONG-TERM LEASE FOR SCHOOL PROPERTY. AMBASSADOR MADE CLEAR THAT UNDER SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE CHECKED FIRST WITH WASHINGTON. SCHOOL WOULD WISH TO OBTAIN TITLE TO BUILDINGS SO THAT THEY COULD BE USED AS COLLATERAL FOR FUTURE BORROWING. MAJALI EVINced NO OBJECTIONS TO THIS PROCURE.

5. ON SECOND ISSUE, REGISTRATION OF SCHOOL WITH RIGHT TO BE EXEMPT FROM PRESENT GOJ CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS, MAJALI SAID PRIME MINISTER'S STRONG PREFERENCE IS FOR CONTINUED TREATMENT OF THE SCHOOL BY GOJ AS AN ADJUNCT OR INSTITUTION OF THE AMERICAN MISSION IN AMMAN. AMABASSADOR RAISED QUESTION OF NEED FOR LOCAL REGISTRATION IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR FUTURE BORROWING. MAJALI COUNTERED WITH SUGGESTION THAT OFFICIAL SCHOOL BOARD WHICH CONTROLLED CURRICULUM AND EDUCATION POLICY BE FORMULATED WITH HEAVY DIPLOMATIC INPUT AND WITH AMBASSADOR AS CHARIMAN OR EX OFFICIO CHAIRMAN. PREPONDERANCE OF MEMBERS WOULD BE EX OFFICIO BUT VOING MEMBERS OF EMBASSY. FOR PURPOSES OF HOLDING TITLE TO THE BUILDINGS, RAISING FUNDS, AND OTHER SUCH TASKS, A SECOND GROUP, POSSIBLY TO BE CALLED "THE FRIENDS OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SCHOOL IN AMMAN" COULD BE CREATED. THIS GROUP COULD BE REGISTERED AS A JORDANIAN SOCIETY WITH ITS SPECIFIC DUTIES ALSO SET OUT.

6. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THAT IN PRINCIPLE THIS SOUNDED LIKE A GOOD SUGGESTION AND WE WOULD INVESTIGATE FURTHER HOW IT COULD BE DONE. IN ORDER TO GIVE PROPER DIPLOMATIC FLAVOR TO THE PROCEEDINGS, WHICH IS WHAT GOJ CLEARLY DESIRES, AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED WE MIGHT LOOK AT PROVIDING THE GOJ FOREIGN OFFICE FOR ITS INFORMATION A NOTE OUTLINING THE PLANS FOR THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL, INCLUDING A DESCRIPTION OF THE TWO MBOARD ARRANGEMENT, PRECISE DEFINITION OF THE VARIOUS RESPONSIBILITIES AND MEMBERSHIPS OF THESE BOARDS, AND INDICATION THAT THE TITLE-HOLDING BOARD WOULD BE REGISTERED AS A JORDANIAN SOCIETY. THE AMBASSADOR THEN SAID THAT IF WE PROCEEDED IN SUCH FASHION WE WOULD WANT TO HAVE A SIMPLE DIPLOMATIC NOTE BACK FROM GOJ ACKNOWLEDGING RECEIPT

OF OUR NOTE AND INDICATING THAT IT HAD NO OBJECTION TO THIS METHOD OF PROCEEDING. DR. MAJALI SAID HE THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE AND THAT IN ANY EVENT DRAFTS SHOULD BE PREPARED WHICH COULD BE CLEARED WITH APPROPRIATE GOJ OFFICIALS BEFORE ANY FINAL STEPS WERE TAKEN. THE AMBASSADOR INDICATED THAT WE SHOULD PROCEED ALONG THESE LINES AND SEE WHAT COULD BE DEVELOPED.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: WE PRESUME THAT THIS SERIES OF SUGGESTIONS WILL HELP RESOLVE SOME OF OUR MORE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS. THE PRESENT LANDLORDS ARE NOT LIKELY TO GIVE UP LIGHTLY THEIR REVERSIONARY INTEREST IN PRESENT BUILDINGS ON EXISTING SITE. THEREFORE WE STILL HAVE STRONG EXPECTATION THAT SOME FUNDS WILL HAVE TO CHANGE HANDS IN LIQUIDATION OF THIS DEAL. THEREFORE WE HOPE AND EXPECT THAT AID, DOD, RAYTHEON AND OTHER POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FUNDS WILL BE HELD COMPLETELY OPEN UNTIL WE SEE FINAL SHAPE OF ARRANGEMENTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO BE ARRIVED AT. IN THE MEANTIME WE WOULD WISH TO KNOW AS SOON AS POSSIBLE OF ANY OBJECTIONS WHICH DEPARTMENT OR WASHINGTON COMMUNITY HAS TO ABOVE OUTLINED METHOD OF PROCEEDING. WE WOULD EXPECT TO PROVIDE YOU WITH TEXT OF PROPOSED DIPLOMATIC NOTE BEFORE FINAL EXCHANGE MADE. PICKERING

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